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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3203
INFO RUEHAW/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 1037
RUEHQA/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 0966
RUEHOM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 1462
RUEHJH/AMEMBASSY JERUSALEM PRIORITY 1214
RUEHJH/AMEMBASSY JDDA PRIORITY 1048
RUEHJH/USDAO RIYADH PRIORITY 0883
RUEHJH/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY 1355
RUEHJH/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
BT
CONFIDENTIAL BEIRUT 10513

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PINS, WOPIS, LE
SUBJECT: BARRI'S COMMENTS ON SECURITY SITUATION IN
THE SOUTHERN SUBURBS

1. (C-ENTIRE TEL) **DLE**
2. DURING A SEPTEMBER 21 CONVERSATION WITH (UNBIM
BARRI) WE ASKED ABOUT THE MILITARY/SECURITY SITUATION
IN THE SOUTHERN SUBURBS, SPECIFICALLY IN THE
TAYYUNAH CIRCLE AREA WHERE EXCHANGES WITH THE LEBANESE
ARMY ARE A DAILY OCCURRENCE (SEE BEIRUT 10326).
BARRI SAID THAT THE TAYYUNAH SHOOTOUTS STEM FROM THE
FACT THAT A "PHILANGIST" IS COMMANDING LAF TROOPS
ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE LINE. EVERYWHERE
ELSE IN THE SOUTHERN SUBURBS WHERE MILITIAMEN
AND THE ARMY ARE IN PROXIMITY, AMAL HAS ESTABLISHED
RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE COMMANDERS (MOSTLY SHIA)
AND WHEN INCIDENTS DO OCCUR, THEY ARE QUICKLY
RESOLVED. BARRI ASSERTED THAT THE INITIAL EXCHANGES
AT TAYYUNAH WERE PRECIPITATED BY THE LAF; NOW IT
IS DIFFICULT TO TELL WHO FIRES FIRST ON ANY GIVEN
DAY. HE ADDED THAT AT LEAST ON THE AMAL SIDE OF
THE LINE, THERE ARE VERY FEW CASUALTIES FROM THESE
CLASHES.

3. BARRI MADE THE FOLLOWING OTHER COMMENTS OF
INTEREST CONCERNING SOUTH BEIRUT:
-- AMAL HAS NO PLANS FOR A MAJOR OFFENSIVE ACTION.

-- THERE ARE SOME NON-AMAL MILITIAMEN INVOLVED,
MAINLY COMMUNIST ACTION ORGANIZATION FIGHTERS IN THE
TAYYUNAH AREA. IN SPITE OF AMAL'S TRADITIONAL
ANTIPATHY TOWARD THE COMMUNISTS, BARRI SAID HE CANNOT
AFFORD AN INTERCINE BATTLE IN WEST BEIRUT AT THIS
TIME. HE MAINTAINED, HOWEVER, THAT THE CAO GUNMEN
OPEARE ONLY ON CONDITION THAT ALL THEIR ACTIONS
ARE CONTROLLED BY AMAL COMMANDERS. THOSE WHO ATTEMPT TO

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OR "OTHER MEASURES" ARE TAKEN.

-- GOVERNMENT ASSERTIONS THAT LARGE NUMBERS OF
PALESTINIAN FIGHTERS ARE INFILTRATING FROM SHARAFAT
INTO BEIRUT THROUGH THE SUBURBS ARE VASTLY
EXAGGERATED. A FEW MAY HAVE SLIPPED IN, BUT AMAL,
WHICH WAGED A SERIES OF BATTLES AGAINST THE PLO
PRIOR TO THE ISRAELI INVASION, IS ON THE ALERT FOR
ANY LARGE-SCALE INFILTRATION ATTEMPTS AND WOULD
ACTIVELY COMBAT THEM.

-- BARRI IS NOT CONCERNED OVER THREATS TO HIS
LEADERSHIP FROM MORE RADICAL SHIA FIGURES; IN LARGE
PART HE HAS PREEMPTED THEM BY THE DECISIVE ACTION
OF PUTTING AMAL MILITIAMEN IN THE STREETS OF SOUTH
BEIRUT. THE PRO-IRANIAN HIZBALLAH PARTY HAS ONLY "A
FEW" FOLLOWERS IN SOUTH BEIRUT AND SHIA EXTREMIST
MUHAMMAD HUSAYN FADLALLAH IS NOT EVEN IN THE CITY.

COMMENT: BARRI'S COMMENTS ON THE SITUATION AT
TAYYUNAH CIRCLE TRACK FAIRLY CLOSELY WITH INFORMATION
WE HAVE RECEIVED FROM OTHER SOURCES. HIS EXPLANATION
OF AMAL CONTROL OVER CAO FIGHTERS IS PLAUSIBLE;
WE DOUBT THAT GIVEN PAST FRICTION, AMAL AND THE
CAO COULD OPERATE SIDE BY SIDE AS INDEPENDENT
ORGANIZATIONS WITHOUT CLASHES DEVELOPING. DILLON
END OF MESSAGE CONFIDENTIAL

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